THE NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS
BENGALURU • THURSDAY • FEBRUARY 24, 2022 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 22 • LATE CITY EDITION

Moderate turnout in UP

Two high profile districts – Raebareli and Lucknow – were among the nine that went to polls on Wednesday

61.52% voter turnout (62.55% was final polling figures in 2017)

2.3 crore people, including 1.14 crore men and 99.3 lakh women, were eligible to vote

51 of the 59 seats where polls were held were won by the BJP in 2017

TOP POLLING DISTRICTS

Pilibhit	67.59%
Kheri	66.32%
Sitapur	62.66%
Rae Bareli	61.90%
Fatehpur	60.07%
Lucknow	60.05%

SP flags 'irregularities'

Samajwadi Party has alleged certain irregularities in some areas of Lucknow, Unnao, Hardoi and Sitapur and demanded action.

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Shivamogga curfew till Saturday; 2 more held

Slain Bajrang Dal man's phone missing from murder scene

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Shivamogga

A police drone lifts off to undertake surveillance of sensitive areas in Shivamogga on Wednesday | VINOD KUMAR T

THE police have arrested two more persons in connection with the murder of Bajrang Dal activist Harsha on Wednesday, taking the number to eight so far. Curiously, the police said that the phone Harsha was using, has been missing from the site of attack.

Home Minister Araga Jnanendra said in Bengaluru that the two arrested have been identified as Faraz Pasha (24) and Abdul Khadar Jilan (25). Two officers of Additional Director General of Police rank, who are camping in Shivamogga, are heading the inquiry, he added. The city was largely peaceful on Wednesday with no reports of any untoward incidents. Drones are being used to keep vigil and police and RAF personnel have been deployed in sensitive areas.

Deputy Commissioner R Selvamani announced that the curfew in place from 11 pm on Sunday, will be extended till 9 am on Saturday, considering the prevailing situation. On Tuesday, it was announced that the curfew will be extended only till 9 am on Friday. All processions, programmes, victory marches and other events, where people take part in large numbers, are prohibited and more than five people cannot gather at one place. All shops will be closed, but milk, groceries and vegetables will be sold from 6 am to 8 am, the DC stated in the order.

Meanwhile, some Kannada television news channels aired reports quoting one of Harsha's friends that two girls had made video calls to him seeking help, on the day of his murder. "Harsha and our friends were together from around 6 pm to 7 pm. During this time, two girls called him and told him that they were his friends. Harsha told the girls that he did not know them and disconnected the call. The girls repeatedly called Harsha, but he disconnected the calls," he claimed. P4

We don't think this as an ordinary murder case. We will expose the forces behind it. There are many possibilities in this case involving various organisations, which the police are probing
— Araga Jnanendra, Home Minister

NEED TO UNMASK THE NSE CABAL

Since the SEBI ignored multiple leads to probe the NSE scam, the elephantine issue of cabal control of the bourse through the Chitra-fake Yogi combine became merely a breach of rules of corporate governance, norms of remuneration and other piffles in its order, writes

S Gurumurthy

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EXPRESS READ

In a first, transgenders can seek teacher posts

BENGALURU: The Department of Public Instruction has called for applications of primary school teachers in some government schools in the state, with 1 per cent reservation for transgenders. This makes Karnataka the first state to recruit teachers from the community. P5

NCP's Malik arrested in money-laundering case

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI @ Mumbai

Maharashtra Minister Nawab Malik taken for a medical test after his arrest by the ED on Wednesday | PTI

THE Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday arrested Maharashtra minister and NCP chief spokesman Nawab Malik in connection with a money-laundering case linked to gangster Dawood Ibrahim. After over eight hours of questioning, the ED arrested him. He was produced before a special court, which remanded him in the central agency's custody till March 3.

Malik is the second NCP minister to be arrested by the ED after former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh.

The ED picked up Malik from his house for questioning on Wednesday morning in connection with the purchase of a property from fugitive underworld don Dawood Ibrahim's sister Hasina Parkar. The NCP leader said he was arrested without any notice of summons. He was issued summons after reaching ED office.

According to the court arguments by the ED counsel, the case was registered against Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar on February 3,2020. Dawood is involved in various terror activities and money-laundering. Besides, unauthorised properties are acquired and sold and that money is funded for terror activities. Dawood's sister Hasina was also controlling a similar property in Kurla, though the actual owner of the property was one Munira, who inherited it from her parent. One Salim Patel, connected to Hasina, was given power of attorney of this property to remove some encroachments, but he illegally sold it to Nawab Malik for ₹55 lakh.

In her statement to ED, Munira said she did not get a single penny from the transaction. Also, the property was sold at a fraction of its market value of around ₹3.3 crore, it was alleged. The ED said the right of the property was passed on to Malik by Haseena. The agency's counsel said he had enough material to prove the property was bought illegally. Malik's advocate Amit Desai argued the property was bought in 1999 when the money-laundering law was not in existence. "Malik himself is victim in this case because he was not given the clear property title," he argued.

NATIONWIDE	FEB 22	FEB 23
Fresh cases	13,405	15,102
Recoveries	34,226	31,377
Deaths	235	278

KARNATAKA	FEB 22	FEB 23
Fresh cases	767	667
Recoveries	1,692	1,674
Deaths	29	21

HIJAB ROW

Wherever prescribed, uniform rule should be followed, says HC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE Karnataka High Court on Wednesday orally clarified that whether it be degree or PU colleges, the prescribed uniform should be followed as long as the pleas on the hijab issue are pending before the court.

Clarifying this at the end of the day's hearing, the full bench of Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi and Justices Krishna S Dixit and J M Khazi said that if a uniform is prescribed, it has to be followed by students till the matter is pending before the court. However, where there is no uniform, there is no question of wearing one, the bench noted.

The clarification came after Mohammad Tahir, counsel of a petitioner, claimed that some degree colleges are also suddenly insisting on uniforms though the interim order is confined only to PU colleges where college development committees are constituted. P4

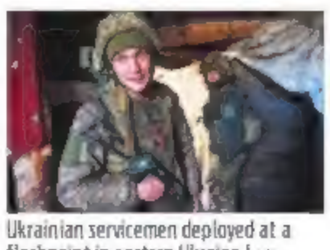
BJP will win 80%, others 20%, says Yogi

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

WITH poll cart already having covered over half of the journey in Uttar Pradesh with the fate of 232 Assembly constituencies sealed in EVMs after the fourth phase on Wednesday, political players are making all sorts of victory claims. As the scene is shifting phase by phase, UP CM **Yogi Adityanath** reiterates that it is a battle of 80 vs 20 where the saffron brigade will return to power winning 80 per cent of seats. "We are coming back winning 80 per cent of seats as people have the confidence that the BJP can provide them security and development both," he says. *(Full interview inside)*

Despite sanctions, Russia on the offensive

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE



Ukrainian servicemen deployed at a flashpoint in eastern Ukraine | AFP

SIGNS of a broader attack on Ukraine became clearer on Wednesday with Moscow evacuating its diplomatic staff from Kyiv and the eastern European country asking its citizens to leave Russia immediately.

Western nations have moved their diplomatic staff from Kyiv to Lviv near Poland, fearing an attack on the Ukraine capital. And EU called an emergency meeting on Thursday.

With tension mounting, the UK warned that Russian President Vladimir Putin is highly likely to order a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said Putin no longer accepted Ukraine's independence under international law.

While the Western powers unveiled a raft of sanctions against Russia, they made it clear that harsher measures await the Putin-led country if it steps up its aggression. "There will be even more tough sanctions on key oligarchs, on key organisations in Russia, limiting Russia's access to the financial markets, if there is a full-scale invasion of Ukraine," UK Foreign Secretary said.

Crisis rooted in post-Soviet politics: India

The situation in Ukraine has its roots in post-Soviet politics, the expansion of NATO and the dynamics between Russia and Europe, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said

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